6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

With an energetic Khan at the head of such raiders, who knew how to organize them along military lines, a horde of looters was often able to transform itself into a highly disciplined army.[31] Being in the midst of a hostile population, the conquerors held fast together. Thus, despotically governed principalities and states were formed and ruled by small bands of horsemen who knew how to use their military advantage over the subjugated and disarmed peoples. It was in this manner that these nomadic warriors had in the early centuries of this era imposed their rule on the Old-Slavonic agricultural population between the Volga and Dnieper rivers.[32]

3

POWER-INDIFFERENCE OF THE OLD-SLAVONIC PLOWMEN

I

ACCORDING to both linguistic and historical evidence, it appears that the early home of the Old-Slavonic peasant folk was centered in the middle Dnieper and its western tributaries, a region known as Polesie. Before drainage, this area consisted of deep swamps (Pripet marshes) throughout which were scattered many islets of land. The scantiness of cultivable soil forced the inhabitants to subsist by means of very intensive tillage. Hand hoes and hook-plows, to which men yoked themselves, were the principal modes of cultivation. For clothing and oil, flax and hemp were planted.

The people were, on the whole, vegetarians. Some hogs were raised but few sheep or cattle. There was, however, abundant fishing and some hunting. Bee-keeping was prevalent and an intoxicating drink was fermented from honey. Communication between the islets in this marshy land proved difficult during all seasons; therefore, the population, in order to survive, had

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

to maintain a system of economic self-sufficiency which was restricted to small villages or groups of such villages.[1]

In early documents these Old-Slavonic plowmen are described as peaceful, moderate, mild, and humane, patient and sober, disinterested in power, hard working, living in social and political democracy. They are pictured as being opposed to subjection, but unable to offer much resistance to a foreign aggressor since they were not skilled in warfare. Procopius (6th century), for instance, said that "these people are not ruled by one man, but they have lived from of old under a democracy, and consequently everything which involves their welfare, whether for good or for ill, is referred to the people."[2] And Emperor Leo (9th century) stated the following:

> . . . jealous of their liberty they have always refused to submit themselves to the Empire. . . . even those who have accepted Christianity keep as much as they can the forms of their ancient freedom. . . . This is a numerous nation, patient in difficult times, and very industrious. Heat, cold, hunger, and want of all things do not beat down these people. . . . They used to be very hospitable and still maintain with great care this virtue. They are affable people and receive travellers with much kindness, show them the way, and protect them against insult. If a traveller would not be well treated by his host because of host's fault all the people would attack the host. They behave with much gentleness also toward their slaves; they do not condemn them to perpetual slavery, but fix a time of service . . . after which time . . . they free them. The women are well-behaved, and attached to their husbands. . . . These people are very frugal . . . they prefer to live with much freedom. . . . They like to take refuge in the woods or in inaccessible places.[3]

The people of Polesie seem to have been politically organized in a system of smaller groupings of self-governing villages or even in single autonomous villages connected among themselves, not in the form of a central authority or state, but rather as a loose confederation of independent units. Apparently, there were no marked social distinctions or differences in class and rank in this society. There was no aristocracy, no separate class of priests or warriors, no cities, no temples. There was, therefore, no class or clique which sought power and expansion over others,